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TAGS: IO PREL PGOV CM  
SUBJECT: CAMEROON'S UN REP: BIYA WANTS POSITIVE RELATIONS  
WITH THE U.S. MORE "VISIBLE"

**¶1.** (SBU) President Biya has instructed his diplomats to make Cameroon's positive relations with the U.S. more "visible," according to Cameroon's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Martin Belinga Eboutou. Belinga called on Charge d'Affaires on August 6 to ask how Cameroon's UN delegation could help further USG priority issues.

**¶2.** (SBU) The resolution of the Bakassi dispute with Nigeria, Belinga said, would free more resources for Cameroon to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs). Belinga welcomed the prospect of Cameroon's participation in the ACOTA program, and noted that future Cameroonian contributions to UNPKOs were a priority for the USG.

**¶3.** (SBU) Belinga placed the chance of Biya's attendance at the upcoming UNGA at about 60 percent, which he raised to 75 percent when told of First Lady Laura Bush's invitation to Cameroonian First Lady Chantal Biya. According to Belinga, the big draws for Biya will be a proposed head of state meeting on climate change (NFI) before the opening of UNGA and the chance to attend the first UNGA under the leadership of UNSYG Ban Ki-Moon. Additionally, Belinga said, the presence of French President Sarkozy would attract Biya, especially if the French go ahead with a planned Africa-specific side meeting before UNGA opens (NFI).

**¶4.** (SBU) Belinga studied in Paris and Kinshasa, where he reported having seen films of life in America (sponsored by the USG, he implied) that left him with a positive impression of the United States. Belinga averred that France is too "closed," especially in comparison to the U.S. Belinga posited that the Cameroonian public holds the U.S. in high esteem and suggested that the U.S. would easily win a "popularity contest" among Cameroonians.

**¶5.** (SBU) Comment. We have long sought greater Cameroonian engagement in the region and in international fora. This is not the first time that we have heard reports of Biya's instructions to move the Government of Cameroon closer to the USG and to pursue activities, like ACOTA, that will lead to greater participation in PKOs. Belinga's demarche is yet another indication that Cameroon wants to play more of a leadership role in Africa, and wants to partner with the USG in doing so. End comment.

NELSON